



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

Each year the goal of the NYSWYSA Technical Staff is to provide high level programming and outstanding membership services to promote and grow the game of soccer. In 2024-25 programming stretched across all levels of play and into every corner of the Western New York footprint. The Olympic Development Program, NYW Player Development Academy, Coaching Education, Recreation Soccer services/support/events, TopSoccer and the Women's Coaches Initiative, are but a few of the many ways in which we interact with our vast and varied youth soccer community. Our work in these areas has been important in helping us continue to establish, maintain and develop valuable relationships with our membership. We aspire to serve, engage and be a resource to all of our NYSWYSA members.

Olympic Development Program

The NYW ODP program continues to be a leader in US Youth Soccer's East Region. The ODP experience continues to provide first class training that supplements the soccer experiences players receive with their school and club teams, thereby accelerating each player's ability to reach their full potential. Thirty-seven NYW ODP players were identified as East Regional Pool selections and fourteen were selected to their respective age group's East Region ODP Team (validating the tremendous work that our member clubs do in developing some of the region's top players).

Traditional ODP (12U-17U), Pre-ODP (11U) and 19U ODP participant levels collectively showed a slight decrease of 4%, primarily due to a decrease in 11U participation. Having said that, traditional ODP (12U-17U) participant numbers were up 21% from 2023/24. NYW sent nine teams to the 2025 ODP Tournament, one less than in 2024.



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In 2024/25, the ODP Northeast Sub-Regional event in Albany continued to expand in size and scope. The event, previously held as “Friendlies” between only NYW and Eastern NY ODP teams, now includes multiple ODP state teams from the East Region. The late April event included teams from MA, CT, VT, NH, and NJ, in addition to NYW and ENY (ENY-N and ENY-S). The event represents a second competitive ODP event where ODP players have the opportunity to be scouted and evaluated by the ODP East Region Coaching Staff as well as numerous college coaches. NYW sent eleven teams to this event in 2025 (as compared to eight teams in 2024).

In 2025, the ODP Tournament was conducted at two sites. The girl’s ODP state teams participated in a festival format at PA Classics Park in Manheim, PA (the youth club alma mater of Christian Pulisic, whose finger prints and financial backing were evident by virtue of the first class amenities displayed throughout the entire park). The boy’s ODP state teams, who also participated in a festival format, played at Tuckahoe Turf Farms in Hammonton, NJ. This event was conducted alongside an EDP hosted club tournament on the same weekend, the benefit of which was the ability to capitalize on the plethora of college coaches the joint event would attract. Each year, the genders alternate between these two sites.

As previously noted, thirty-seven players were selected to attend their respective regional ID camps (as compared to thirty in 2024). Fourteen players were selected to their respective age group’s East Regional ODP Team (as compared to eight in 2023). They will travel to Orlando, FL in late January of 2026 to the ODP Inter-Regional Event. Here, in addition to competing against the regional teams from the South, Midwest and West regions, players will vie for selection to their respective age group ODP National Teams. The ODP National Teams will then compete against top



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domestic and international competition at tournaments later in the spring of 2026. Last year's NYW Regional Team players competed in tournaments in Orland, FL (2011's, 2012's - Rayados Easter International Cup), Spain (2007's), Italy (2008's), England (2009's) and Costa Rica (2010's) in the spring of 2025.

ODP participation whether it be at the state, regional or national level provides invaluable soccer experiences and tremendous exposure to both college and youth national team scouts.

It bears repeating every year - I would like to acknowledge and applaud the exceptional work that our member clubs and their fine coaching staffs do, in continuing to develop talented players within the NYW footprint. I am committed to continuing to build relationships and, meet, interact and collaborate with as many club coaches as I possibly can. As always, my goal is to make the ODP program a valuable and viable supplement to the outstanding work that the club coaches do in developing their players. Our goals are the same - to provide the players of NYW with good soccer experiences that will help each one of them reach their full potential. By working together and being flexible we can optimize the number of these experiences that we provide to them (without overloading them). I welcome and value the input that I have received from many coaches and I am always willing to work together to create a compatible calendar for our NYW players. It is important that we all recognize that this is an ongoing process and that each year presents its own set of unique challenges. I admire the fine work that our NYW clubs do in developing players – your outstanding work shines through every time your players take the field, no matter what jersey they are wearing.



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NYW Player Development Academy

The NYW Player Development Academy, which takes place each fall and is open to all boys and girls ages 9 to 14, was conducted at four sites throughout the NYW footprint (Buffalo, Elmira, Rochester and Syracuse). In an effort to foster our region's young talent, the Academy is designed to expose young players to focused training sessions provided by nationally certified coaches. The Academy stresses a curriculum focused on improving fundamentals via a heavy emphasis on technical work and small sided games. The program stresses fun and progress in a positive learning environment.

In 2024, participant numbers reflected an extraordinary increase of 77% percent which brought us to an all time high of over three hundred players. This followed an increase of 44% in participation numbers from 2023. Those year over year increases have helped bolster our numbers in other related programming (i.e. ODP) and were a result of concerted marketing and promotional efforts, including an elevated social media campaign. Reaching beyond the scope of this annual report (which would not normally include the recently concluded 2025/26 Academy data), it is prudent to report that 2025 Academy participation numbers from this past fall unfortunately broke from this trend and decreased back to more traditional levels. Untimely personnel changes and ensuing vacancies during the transitioning phase severely reduced the aforementioned marketing and promotional efforts in the lead up for the 2025 edition of the program. This was a one off occurrence and we expect a swift return back to these elevated levels in 2026.



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Coaching Education

Lead Coach Educator, Dave Kreger continues to enhance and expand the NYSWYSA Coaching Education Program. Emerging out of COVID, the number of US Soccer courses conducted in NYW has steadily increased each year:

- 14 courses in 2021/22
- 22 courses in 2022/23
- 26 courses in 2023/24
- 27 courses in 2024/25

Additionally, nine State Level courses were conducted in 2024/25. Collectively, these offerings educated well over four hundred coaches and this marks the third consecutive year of doing so. In 2024/25 seventy-six women coaches (an increase of 33% from 2023/24) and seventy-two D-License coaches (an increase of 67% from 2023/24) were amongst this cohort. Furthermore, over the last five years when tracking these candidate numbers and the trending demand for specific courses, we are observing that the prior heavy concentration of Grassroots courses are now yielding a greater number of D-license candidates. And more recently, the same is playing out with regard to the surge in D-License coaches now producing a huge demand for the C-License. Those projections led us to add/host two C-License courses in the coming 2025/26 season that have subsequently both been sold out.

The re-establishment of State Level courses continues to be a popular option for our members. State Level I and II courses, State Level 101/102



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club centric courses and the revival of the State Level GK I and II courses enabled us to not only reach more coaches, but also provide them with the appropriate content level that best suits their coaching needs. The reintroduction of State Level courses is in direct response to membership seeking alternative coach educational opportunities outside of traditional US Soccer licensing program.

With regard to US Soccer courses, the most popular Grassroots License continues to be the 9v9 (eleven courses) and the 11v11 (eight courses). We conducted four D-Licenses (for the second year in a row) and a total of twenty-three total Grassroots Courses (as compared to twenty-two last year).

We are proud to continue to provide coaching education courses exclusively for women (i.e. women candidates taught by a woman instructors). In conjunction with our Women Coaches Initiative, Diana Groth spearheaded the Women in Coaching Day where she conducted two Grassroots Licenses (9v9 and 11v11). These courses were offered free of charge to women candidates who met the program requirements. (See Women's Coach Initiative).

The current 2025-26 coaching course schedule can be found on our website. Please be sure to check the website regularly for scheduling updates as courses are routinely added throughout the year. Questions regarding Coaching Education, upcoming course offerings and/or opportunities to host a course in your area or in conjunction with your club should be directed to Dave Kreger, NYSWYSA Lead Coach Educator (coachinged@nyswysa.org).



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Connecting Kids to Colleges

NYSWYSA remains committed to bridging the gap between youth players who aspire to play at the collegiate level and the college coaches who scour the youth soccer landscape looking for talented players to add to their rosters. Many of our programs are conducted with this notion in mind. The NYW ODP program coaching staff includes current head and assistant college coaches, the ODP curriculum includes counseling/educating players on the college recruiting process, ODP teams play in two recruiting events in front of college coaches (the ODP Northeast Sub-Regional and the East Region ODP Tournament) and the 19U ODP training program is designed specifically to provide training for the serious and committed player who aspires to play in college.

While schedules didn't align favorably this past spring to allow us to play against collegiate competition, it remains a core element of our program. In 2023 our oldest NYW ODP players gained invaluable experience and a preview of what the game is like at the next level by playing in spring collegiate exhibition games (IE. the girls participated in the Buffalo State Bengal Classic vs. Buffalo St., D'Youville College and Alfred St., the boys participated in an exhibition vs. SUNY Geneseo.

NYSWYSA also promotes the State Cup (National Championship Series) final four to collegiate coaches and provides participating team rosters to the college coaches attending the three day event. We remain committed to connecting kids to colleges. If you want to play collegiate soccer, we want to help you find the place that's right for you – chances are you won't have to leave New York State to find a place that will suit both your academic and athletic objectives.



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After School Programming

A after school pilot program that started in 2022/23 continued to operate at three elementary schools in the Rochester City School District in 2023/24. The initiative was postponed for 2024/25 while we seek out additional grant opportunities to extend either this or another form of after school programming. Our aim with this type of programming is to try to provide after school soccer instruction/activities on a weekly basis for elementary age girls and boys.

Women's Coach Initiative

The Women Coaches Initiative continued the important work of supporting women in coaching. NYW Coach Educator, Diana Groth once again spearheaded our efforts in this area in 2024/25 by hosting the fourth edition of our Women in Coaching Day. The event included a social gathering and the presentation of two women's only Grassroots courses (9v9 and 11v11). Candidates who applied and were accepted into the courses were extended a tuition benefit to cover the applicable course fees. Since its inception in 2022, this event has delivered entry level coach certification to just over fifty women. It has also been the underpinning to the more than two hundred women who have taken coach development courses during that same time period.

TOPSoccer:

TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a New York State West and US Youth Soccer official program. This program is designed for children with



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disabilities, ages 5 to 21 and accommodates all disabilities whether mental or physical. This exciting program brings the joy of playing soccer to players who have not traditionally had a place in the youth soccer system.

TOPSoccer programs were conducted in various locations around Western NY. In 2024/25 programs were conducted in Binghamton (Binghamton University), Buffalo (Clarence SC, Lancaster-Depew SC/SCORE), Rochester (RNYFC) and the Southern Tier (SUNY Fredonia/Northern Chautauqua SA). A TOPSoccer Jamboree was conducted at Lakefront Soccer Club (Webster, NY) and NYSWYSA teamed up with AutismUP of Rochester to integrate TOPSoccer programming into their curriculum. In 2025/26, plans are underway to initiate TOPSoccer programming in collaboration the University of Rochester Special Olympics Club.

TOPSoccer programs are club sponsored and conducted at the direction of NYSWYSA member clubs and supported in various ways by NYSWYSA (i.e. technical and administrative support, equipment, USYS resources, etc). We are still actively looking to establish consistent programming in the Syracuse area. If you know of someone who might enjoy participating in a TOPSoccer program or someone who might like to volunteer (i.e. start/host a program, become a session leader or participate as a "TOPSoccer Buddy", etc.) please contact Dean Foti (dfoti@nyswysa.org). Please visit our website to learn more about the TOPSoccer program nearest you.

Good of the Game

In looking forward to 2026, we will have the eyes of the world upon us. By virtue of hosting the largest ever FIFA World Cup in the summer 2026 (with Mexico and Canada), we have an opportunity to show the world how much



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we have embraced this great game. We also share in the responsibility of showing mainstream America what all the excitement is about. Whatever your role in the game might be, no matter how big or small, we are all stewards of this great sport. Can we make the most popular sport in the world, the most popular sport in the US? While there is work to do to make this happen, one thing is for certain - we will all have another grand opportunity this summer to move the needle!

As always, we are here to support your efforts to find innovative ways to continue to promote and grow the game of soccer.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season!

Respectfully Submitted,
Dean Foti
NYSWYSA
Technical Director